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FILE ONLY

Westmoreland's way of counting enemy defended

FROM COMBINED DISPATCHES

NEW YORK — An intelligence officer testified yesterday that civilians fighting for the Viet Cong inflicted "insignificant" casualties on American soldiers during the Vietnam War and probably did not set mines or booby traps, sharply disputing a CBS documentary.

Col. John Stewart, a witness for Gen. William C. Westmoreland in his \$120 million libel suit against CBS, said the so-called self-defense forces were "little more than a motley crew [of] old men and young boys and sometimes mama-sans."

Col. Stewart's testimony supported Gen. Westmoreland's decision in 1967 to delete more than 100,000 self-defense forces from the official estimate of enemy troop strength.

Gen. Westmoreland is suing over a 1982 documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," that said he artificially deflated the official count of enemy troops by excluding the civilian squads.

The broadcast asserted the deletion was intended to give a false impression to the public and to President Lyndon B. Johnson that the United States was winning the "war of attrition" in Vietnam in 1967.

Col. Stewart and other former intelligence officers in the general's command have testified that there were valid military reasons for the decision to stop counting the civilian militia.

Col. Stewart's portrayal of the self-defense forces clashed sharply with that of the documentary, which quoted a CIA official as saying they set booby traps and mines and staged ambushes responsible for a "large proportion" of U.S. casualties.

"They would almost always drop what few weapons they had and run," Col. Stewart said.

Col. Stewart, who was the senior military intelligence officer in Grenada following the U.S.-led invasion of that island last year, said the self-defense forces "most likely did not lay mines and booby traps."

CBS lawyer David Boies once again hauled out his 7-foot-tall easel and a 4-foot sheet of paper to tally the Army's count of enemy troops it faced and the number of enemy casualties in the Tet offensive.

After writing out the numbers, Mr. Boies concluded that 150,000 enemy troops fought in the battle and 170,000 were killed or wounded — 20,000 more than were said to have fought.